

General Education Implementation update:

The committee met on 4/13/20 via WebEx. Rubrics for all 10 SLOs, which have been vetted by faculty who teach in each area, have been finalized, and the general assessment plan from the original revision (LUX) was approved. The committee also outlined the information it would like the Associate Provost to make available on a clean, forward-facing website that faculty can easily access for all their general education needs.

Faculty members of the committee are updating the assessment schedule to account for the new implementation date (Fall 2021) and SLO distribution. The schedule and a simple, one-page verification form, for faculty to denote the assignments that will be used for assessment purposes in each course (i.e., which assignments will be evaluated with the standard rubric for assessment purposes), should be approved at the next meeting (Wednesday, April 22nd).

The committee will also begin discussing the work already completed by Faculty Senate (the creation of the new GEC and FYS subcommittee) and aiding in the necessary revision of FYS.

BOR update:

The BOR held its quarterly meeting via WebEx on 4/16/20.

The Audit Committee met at 9:45 a.m. to reappoint the auditing firm (Dean Dorton Allen Ford PLLC) and approve the scope of the annual audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020. (Note: KRS 164A.570 requires universities like MSU to have an annual audit). The fee for this fiscal year shall not exceed \$94,700.

The full BOR meeting began at 10:00 a.m. All of the work that was done (i.e., everything that was approved) was part of the consent agenda:

Following the recommendations of the Audit Committee, the full BOR approved the annual scope of the audit and the auditing firm. It ratified the compiled list of personnel actions from 12/5/19 through 4/9/20 (which included hires, leaves of absences, FLSA changes, promotions, renewals, reassignments, separations, and salary supplements).

It approved 4 policies: PG-11 Leave of Absence (military service) and PG-24: Time off for Death in Family and Funeral included with minor revisions for clarification, PAc-17: Sabbaticals and PAc-28: Educational Leave of Absence were just reapproved.

Of most import to faculty, the BOR approved the promotion of 3 assistant professors to full and the tenure (and promotion to associate) of 6 assistant professors, and accepted the amendment to the mandatory fee schedule for graduate classes to allow students to

take 600-level graduate classes in Education at a reduced rate (\$374 a credit hour, vs. our usual \$570). It also approved the modified pass/fail policy for the 2020 Spring semester and accepted the second quarter financial statements that “provide[] an overview of the University’s financial activities for the six months that ended on December 31, 2019” (April 16, 2020 Agenda, p. 132).

Of most interest to faculty:

Budget: Students will be getting refunds for housing and meal plans, the prorated amount from March 28th-May 8th. Figures are still being determined. Although this returned money will not be our only revenue loss this term, it will be a significant amount (probably \$2m+).

We have applied for the stimulus funds (in the CARES act) as of today. Half of the money (listed as \$6,016,440 in the searchable database in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and the pdf made available by *Inside Higher Ed*) is earmarked for students, the other half for institutional needs. Dr. Morgan favors keeping this money (which we haven’t received yet) separate from current budget lines and considerations (such as refunds for meal plans and housing). When we do receive these funds, they will be placed in designated accounts for future use.

I inquired who would be overseeing/tracking these funds once they were received, and I was told that that has not been fully determined yet. (Quick primer on why that is even a question: restricted governmental funds, such as money for building or M&O [maintenance and operation], are normally overseen by the chief financial officer, but CARES offers the stimulus as grants, and grants are overseen by the senior grants and contracts accountant.)

Hiring and Human Capital: The President relayed to the Board what he has noted in recent campus wide communications: we’re being very, very cautious in terms of hiring and not automatically filling lines that become open (through retirement and separation). He also noted that “we” (presumably the upper admin) would be looking at employee credentials to see where people could be put to best use. We (as in faculty) ought to consider this in light of the President’s April 13th campus-wide communication, which included this statement:

As we curtail new hiring across campus, we will likely have a need to make sure we have an adequate amount of faculty and staff to cover courses this fall and other core areas. Our goal will be to try to utilize full-time employees that we currently have to cover courses this fall before we go off-campus for new ones. This will be one of several ways that we maintain operational funds, preserve jobs, and also allow us to operate with some caution under the circumstances. We will be able to assess our course coverage needs somewhat better after Advance Registration is completed in the next week or so. Additionally, we will know SOAR numbers for incoming new students later in June.

Senate has already been addressing the issue of fractionalization, and attendant issues with teaching observations, in relation to FYS. These recent communications suggest that there are possible plans to expand fractionalization, which could exacerbate existing problems.

Governance relating to technology: The BOR also approved the “University Technology Plan 2020-2024.” The first initiative, “Technology Governance,” calls for the creation of a Technology Advisory Council (TAC) that includes both a faculty and a staff representative. The other membership slots are administrators or general areas (like Student Life). A reconstituted Technology Review Board (TRB), which is supposed to work in consultation with TAC, includes representation from Student Government as well as “College technology representatives,” or the staff and hybrid positions developed to oversee technological needs in each college.

I voted to approve the plan, with the governance structure outlined therein, because it was presented as an “evolving” document that could and would change in relation to needs. As I have already conveyed to President Morgan and CIO Howes, the first initiative is a welcome move (in so far as faculty are given a voice at the table) that should evolve in order to produce better results. The institution already has three existing constitutive bodies (Faculty Senate, Staff Congress, and Student Government) capable of facilitating much of the communication and outreach needed. Instead of creating another governance structure wherein mid and upper level administrators, who often do not even have to use the technological tools under consideration (because they have ADs and support staff to do things like data entry), are given disproportionate sway, the institution can and should open stable lines of multidirectional communication between end users and the tech experts so that end users can identify recurrent technological problems and desired outcomes and tech experts can provide solutions within the frame of the possible. We all know much of our software does not communicate across campus, and that’s a direct consequence of previous institutional choices to isolate end users from tech experts. We have a chance to change this pattern, and produce better outcomes with less unwarranted enmity on campus, if we use the governance structures already in place to address our technological needs.

I would strongly encourage you all to read the technology plan, which is available on the April 16, 2020 Board Agenda, and to contact CIO Howes with your thoughts as to how faculty can facilitate IT’s important work.